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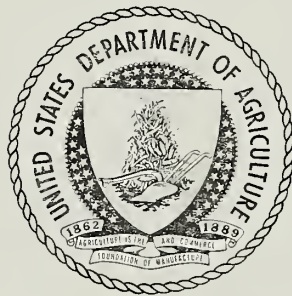
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USDA  
Centennial  
Facts

# 1962

Centennial Year of the  
UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF  
AGRICULTURE

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Growth Through Agricultural Progress

U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Centennial Committee - November 1961



“Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That there is hereby established at the seat of Government of the United States a Department of Agriculture, the general designs and duties of which shall be to acquire and to diffuse among the people of the United States useful information on subjects connected with agriculture in the most general and comprehensive sense of that word \* \* \*.”—*From the Act approved May 15, 1862, by*

PRESIDENT LINCOLN.

\* \* \* \*



“Now, therefore, I, John F. Kennedy, President of the United States of America, do hereby designate the year 1962 as United States Department of Agriculture Centennial Year; and I request the Department of Agriculture to plan and to participate in appropriate activities recognizing the anniversary to the end that the centennial may serve as an occasion to commemorate the contributions of agriculture to the health and welfare of every citizen, to the national well-being, and to the development of emerging nations.”—*From Presidential Proclamation August 25, 1961.*





## A CENTURY OF SERVICE

The United States Department of Agriculture was created by the stroke of President Lincoln's pen May 15, 1862.

By proclamation of President Kennedy, the Department's centennial observance will begin May 15, 1962, and continue throughout the remainder of the year.

In the 100 years intervening, agriculture has met every need of Americans for food and fiber at home and abroad, in war and in peace. Its achievement is a goal sought by the rest of the world, both free and Communist. Its efficiency and productivity, its ability to produce in abundance, sustain millions of the world's underfed people in their struggle for freedom and economic growth.

When President Lincoln signed the act creating the Department, one American farm worker was producing enough food and fiber for 5 people.

When President Kennedy proclaimed the Centennial Year of the United States Department of Agriculture, one farm worker was

growing enough food and fiber for 26 people, and his efficiency was still surging upward. Today's farm products are of superior quality. Wholesomeness of our food is beyond doubt. Its variety seems without limit. Its cost requires only one-fifth of our take-home pay.

This is the farmer's success story. To it, the Department of Agriculture has contributed research, economic aid, education, technical help, and other services. But, essentially, the world's most efficient and productive agriculture springs from the hard work, the ingenuity, and the ability of American farmers and ranchers.

Thus, the Department's centennial observance will, as President Kennedy requested, "commemorate the contributions of agriculture to the health and welfare of every citizen, to the national well-being, and to the development of emerging nations."

Two other centennial observances of prime importance to American agriculture also will occur during 1962. One commemorates the approval of the Morrill Act, which created the national system of land-grant universities and colleges. The other marks the centennial of the Homestead Act, which opened the public domain to settlement and agriculture.

*This fact sheet provides background on the observance of the Department's Centennial, a listing of major centennial events, the situation in agriculture today, the outlook for both farmers and consumers, highlights of the Department's history, and a listing of motion pictures, exhibits, publications, television, and other materials available for the observance.*



Growth Through Agricultural Progress

## CENTENNIAL THEMES

The Department of Agriculture, in cooperation with farm and nonfarm groups, will seek to interpret during its Centennial Year the meaning of modern American agriculture in these terms:

● *Agriculture's importance to all people of the United States—*

Provides abundant, wholesome food when, where, and in the forms we want it, and plentiful supplies of natural fibers—cotton, wool, mohair, and flax.

Creates millions of nonfarm jobs through agriculture's buying power, and through the processing, manufacturing, transporting, and merchandising of farm products.

Conserves for continuing productive use the national heritage of soil, water, grasslands, forests, and wildlife.

Enables the United States to be the world's largest exporter of agricultural products.

Makes possible a Food for Peace program as a major instrument of our foreign policy for peace in a free world.

● *American agriculture's importance to the world—*

Demonstrates that man now has the power to banish the age-old specter of hunger and famine, a fact more important to the hungry than the conquest of space.

Proves that free men can and will develop an agricultural efficiency and productivity far beyond the reach of people under any other system of government.

Gives strength and hope, through Food for Peace and the sharing of production know-how, to the newly developing countries.

Provides a dependable source of food and fiber for nations able to pay in dollars for the food and fiber they need but cannot produce.

● *Efficient use and management of agricultural abundance, with aims for—*

A continuing bountiful supply of food and fiber for American consumers at a fair price, however fast the population increases.

An adequate diet for the unemployed and other needy people of the United States.

Strategic stockpiling against natural disaster or nuclear attack.

Continued substantial sharing of our agricultural abundance with the newly emerging nations until they are able to feed themselves through a more efficient agriculture combined with economic strength for dollar purchases of foods and fibers they cannot produce.

Expanded, stable export markets for the products of American agriculture.

A fair return to American farmers and ranchers for their investment of capital and labor, thus resolving the paradox of increasing farm efficiency and decreasing farm income.

The development of all rural areas to provide full opportunities for all rural residents—farm and nonfarm.



# CENTENNIAL EVENTS



## Agriculture Is Local:

Wherever people produce food and natural fiber and wherever people consume or use them; wherever farm people trade; wherever people process, manufacture, transport, store, or sell farm products; wherever people manufacture farm supplies, equipment, and machinery. This is agriculture—from the remotest farm or ranch to the heart of the biggest city.

## Agriculture Is National:

In total, agriculture is the Nation's biggest industry. Its assets exceed \$206 billion. Its annual cash sales total about \$34 billion. It employs more than 7 million people on its 3.7 million farms and ranches. Four of every 10 jobs in private employment are in agriculture, or related to it. Farmers and their families have a buying power of \$40 to \$41 billion a year. Farmers use nearly half as much steel as the automobile and truck industry, more petroleum products than any other industry, and are major purchasers of rubber, chemicals, electricity, and countless other products. That's the economic side of *national* agriculture. But national agriculture is more than economic; it sustains the lives of a Nation's people with food and many other necessities in abundance.

## U.S. Agriculture Is International:

One acre of every six harvested in the United States produces for export to the people of other nations.

Thus, the Centennial Year will be commemorated with local, State, regional, national, and international events. For the same reasons, business, industry, and civic and other groups will join with farmers and farm organizations in the observance.

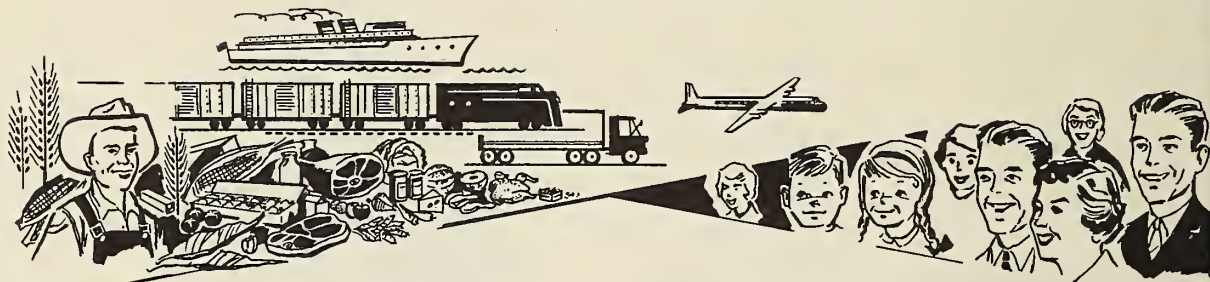
Centennial dinners in Washington and throughout the country will begin the observance May 15, 1962.

A World Food Forum in Washington May 15-17 will present a vital world food program. Speakers from many nations will be on the program.

Field days at agricultural laboratories, experiment stations, in watershed protection and flood prevention projects, and on farms and ranches throughout the country will interpret research and service developments and present relationship of all people to agriculture and the resources with which it works—soil, water, grassland, forest, and wildlife.

Each county will have a centennial planning chairman to coordinate local programs and events. Many observances also will emphasize the centennial of the land-grant colleges and universities. The Department and the land-grant institutions have worked cooperatively since their founding.

# AGRICULTURE U.S.A. 1962



Agriculture fulfills in the United States one hope of man since he first felt the pangs of hunger. Food then was survival—life. It still is. In this country, food flows from farms and ranches in an abundance never equalled in any other time or place.

All the other needs of a nation for agricultural products are provided as abundantly as food—fiber for clothing, timber for shelter, and a vast supply of raw materials for industrial use. From amino acids (the building blocks of life) and antibiotics (the savers of life) to zein (for plastics) and zymolic acid (an industrial chemical), innumerable industrial products are created from crops and livestock.

From farm gate to consumer, agriculture creates payrolls and national wealth.

## The Paradox of Agriculture

By every standard save one, American agriculture is a phenomenal success. Despite its efficiency, its productivity, its great assets, its fulfillment of a civilization's needs for food and fiber for a remarkably small share of consumer income, and its vital role in the national economy and defense, agriculture has not achieved economic well-being generally for its own members.

This was the paradox of agriculture as it entered the 1960's—increasing efficiency, yet declining income.

Unlike many manufacturers and other producers, farmers have not been able to set and maintain prices through management of market supply. This is probably the major reason why farmers have not profited more adequately from their efficiency, and have not achieved parity of buying power with other groups in the economy.

This was the situation in 1960:

As a group, farmers and ranchers were near the bottom of the economic ladder. Net farm income had dropped 26 percent from 1947–49, while farm production per man-hour had soared 108 percent.

As individuals, farmers varied greatly in income from the national averages. Returns also varied by types of farming in different regions of the country.

Compare the hourly return for the labor of the farm operator and his family in 1960 with that of 1947–49:

Dairy farms in eastern Wisconsin, 33 cents an hour in 1960, down 11 cents from 1947–49.

Dairy farms in western Wisconsin, 56 cents an hour, up 9 cents.

Cash grain farms in the Corn Belt, 73 cents, down \$1.45.

Hog-beef fattening farms in the Corn Belt, 50 cents, down \$1.70.

Cotton farms in the southern Piedmont, 32 cents, down 5 cents.

Cotton farms in the Texas Black Prairie, 26 cents, down 60 cents.

Cotton farms in the non-irrigated Texas High Plains, \$2.49, down 6 cents.

Cotton farms in the irrigated Texas High Plains, \$3.80, down 1 cent.

Small tobacco farms, North Carolina Coastal Plains, 84 cents, up 24 cents.

Large tobacco-cotton farms, North Carolina Coastal Plains, \$1.07, up 24 cents.

Peanut-cotton farms, Southern Coastal Plains, 82 cents, up 23 cents.

Wheat-fallow farms, Washington and Oregon, \$1.29, down \$3.10.

Wheat-pea farms, Washington and Idaho, \$1.31, down \$2.66.

Wheat-small grain-livestock farms, Northern Plains, 90 cents, down \$1.23.



Winter wheat farms, Southern Plains, \$2.49, down 76 cents.

Wheat-grain sorghum farms, Southern Plains, \$2.96, up 73 cents.

Cattle ranches, Northern Plains, 50 cents, down 62 cents.

Cattle ranches, Intermountain region, \$1.49, up 3 cents.

Sheep ranches, Southwest, 20 cents, down 50 cents.

Sheep ranches, Northern Plains, \$1.02, up 6 cents.

## Adjustment to Abundance

One basic problem of agriculture 1962 is its and the Nation's adjustment to the new age of abundance and to the scientific and technological advances that helped to bring it about.

Stimulated by the new technology, agricultural production has raced ahead of population growth. Population increased by 19 percent from 1950 to 1960, but farm output rose 26 percent. Supply exceeded consumption.

This sharp rise in production was accomplished with 32 percent less labor and 21 million fewer cropland acres, but with big increases in the things farmers buy from industry—40 percent more tractors, 49 percent more grain combines, 71 percent more cornpickers and shellers, 41 percent more trucks, and 72 percent more fertilizers.

Prices went up for the things farmers buy, and down for the commodities they sell. Production cost rates were 17 percent higher in 1960 than in 1950; prices of farm products were down 8 percent during the same period, and realized net income dropped 11 percent.

Agriculture's assets increased from \$131 billion in 1950 to \$206 billion in 1961. Production assets per farm worker rose from \$9,625 to \$21,235.

Farms grew larger (from an average of 215 acres in 1950 to 302 in 1959) and fewer (from 5.4 million farms in 1950 to 3.7 million in 1959).

Even with these adjustments, only 21 of every 100 farms sold products valued at \$10,000 or more in 1959. And 44 of every 100 farms sold products valued at less than \$2,500.

Thus, the so-called farm problem emerges as twofold—one affecting the commercial farm, the other the small or marginal farm.

The family commercial farm has widely adopted the technological advances and has become so efficient and so productive that supply has outraced population growth and consumption.

The small or marginal farm is largely being bypassed in the march of technology, because its farm resources are too limited to apply fully the new scientific methods. More than a million farm families have had too few farm resources to provide full-time employment and obtain a satisfactory level of living.

To raise income through fuller employment, hundreds of thousands of farmers have turned to nonfarm work part-time. Forty-four of every 100 farm operators worked part time off the farm in 1959. Thirty-six of every 100 farm operators said they and members of their families received more income from nonfarm sources than the value of all farm products sold.

Large numbers of farm people have been unable to find part-time employment within commuting distance of their farms. Between 1950 and 1960, more than 1,000 rural counties lost population.

Yet, underemployment remains high among farm people. If the underemployment of individuals in agriculture in 1961 were converted on an annual basis to an unemployment figure, agriculture would have more than 1 million unemployed. During the next 15 years, an estimated 2.7 million farm boys will reach working age and will require job opportunities. During the same period, about 6.9 million other young men in rural areas who are not on the farm also will be seeking careers.

Scientific and technological advances have resulted in displacement of human resources in agriculture, as well as tremendous increases in farm efficiency and productivity.

## Resolving the Paradox

With the same initiative and energy that made American agriculture the world's most efficient and productive, farmers and ranch-

ers are working out their problems of adjustment to the age of abundance.

They have the help of the Department of Agriculture. It has reshaped existing programs and has new programs authorized by Congress to attack the problems of unmanaged, price-depressing supplies, low income, shortage of credit, underemployment, and underdevelopment of rural areas.

A program for managing abundance is moving ahead.

Efforts are being made to bring production more nearly into line with needs, particularly wheat and feed grains—the crops in greatest excess production—by means of payments for diversion of crop acreages to conservation uses and, in the case of wheat, with marketing quotas.

More food and other farm products are being put to use—for consumers—rather than being held in storage. Two and a half million more needy are receiving food, and all needy have a better and more varied diet. More food is being provided school children. Increasing amounts of food and other products are going to the people of the new nations, under the Food for Peace program. Exports for dollars are being expanded wherever possible.

Other forces are helping to resolve agriculture's paradox. The new area redevelopment program applies to rural areas as well as to urban. More and more industry is moving into the open country. Town and country are working together as never before to develop the areas on which both depend. Training for new jobs off the farm increasingly is available for those who want to prepare for the new jobs opening in or near rural areas.

Farm income already is increasing, with the aid of increased price supports and 1961 feed grain program payments of around \$750 million.

In November, it appeared that realized gross farm income in 1961 will set a new record, reaching at least \$39½ billion and possibly going as high as \$40 billion. Net farm income was expected to be about \$1 billion greater than in 1960, possibly reaching \$12.8 billion—the highest since 1953.

Reasoned hope is strong that agriculture increasingly will reap the rewards which Americans traditionally have accorded great efficiency and productivity.

## The Farmer's Record of Efficiency

By any standard, agriculture's record of efficiency is outstanding in a nation renowned for efficiency.

Compare agriculture with industry. Productivity of farm workers increased by 6½ percent a year during the 1950's. Output per man-hour in nonagricultural industry increased by about 2 percent a year.

Compare American agriculture with that of other countries. Here, 1 farm worker produces enough food and fiber for 26 people. In Russia, 1 farm worker produces enough for only 4 or 5. More than 40 percent of the total labor force of the Soviet Union works in agriculture and forestry. In this country, it is only about 9 percent.

Compare agriculture with that of other countries in its ability to feed a nation's people at a reasonable cost. Americans spend only 20 percent of their take-home pay for food. Russians have to spend more than 50 percent of their income for food. The French and English spend about 30 percent.

Compare American agriculture with its own record in years past. One hour of farm labor produces nearly twice as much food and fiber as it did in 1950, 3 times as much as in 1940, and 4½ times as much as in 1910.

Translate these increases in agricultural efficiency into pounds, quarts, and dozens, instead of the bushels, hundredweights, or live weights used to measure food as it leaves the farm. In these terms, 1 hour of farm work would produce enough unprocessed food to provide:

Flour—41 pounds in 1910-14 and 243 pounds in 1955-59, up 493 percent.

Cornmeal—23 pounds in 1910-14 and 146 in 1955-59, up 535 percent.

Rice, milled—19 pounds in 1910-14 and 160 in 1955-59, up 742 percent.

Milk—12 quarts in 1910-14 and 24 quarts in 1955-59, up 100 percent.

Beef, dressed—12 pounds in 1910-14 and 16½ pounds in 1955-59, up 37 percent.



Pork, dressed, excluding lard—16 pounds in 1910–14 and 20 pounds in 1955–59, up 25 percent.

Eggs—4 dozen in 1910–14 and 9 dozen in 1955–59, up 125 percent.

Turkeys, ready to cook—2½ pounds in 1910–14 and 11½ pounds in 1955–59, up 360 percent.

The broiler industry is perhaps the outstanding example of increased efficiency in meat production. The Department has no records for broiler production in 1910–14. But in 1935–39, 1 hour of labor produced enough poultry to provide only 8½ pounds of ready-to-cook broilers as compared with 45 pounds in 1955–59. This is an increase of 429 percent.

The situation is about the same with other agricultural products. For example, an hour of farm work in 1910–14 produced enough cotton for two business shirts; in 1955–59, enough for nearly eight shirts. Enough tobacco was produced with 1 hour of farm work in 1910–14 for 20½ packs of cigarettes; in 1955–59 for 74½ packs.

If farmers and ranchers were still using the same methods they used as recently as 1940, it would cost about \$15 billion more a year to produce food and fiber. That averages out to about \$330 for each American family.

## Agriculture and the National Economy

Farmers spend \$25 to \$26 billion a year for goods and services to produce crops and livestock, and at least another \$15 billion a year for the same things that urban people buy—food, clothing, drugs, furniture, appliances, and other products and services.

Each year, farmers buy:

\$2.5 to \$3 billion in new farm tractors and other motor vehicles, machinery, and equipment. (About \$1.6 billion was spent in 1960 by the primary iron and steel industry for equipment and new plants.) Agriculture uses nearly half as much steel as the automobile and truck industry.

\$3.5 billion for fuel, lubricants, and maintenance of machinery and motor vehicles.

Farming uses more petroleum than any other single industry.

\$1.5 billion for fertilizer and lime.

Agriculture is a major user of rubber. Each year it buys products containing 320 million pounds of rubber, or about 9 percent of the total used in the United States, or enough to put tires on nearly 6 million automobiles.

Agriculture buys 27 billion kwh of electricity annually. This is about 4 percent of the Nation's total, or more than is needed annually by Baltimore, Chicago, Boston, Detroit, Houston, and Washington, D.C. Ninety-seven percent of all farms have electricity.

The horsepower of mechanical engines on American farms is greater than that of the combined total for all factories, mines, railroads, powered merchant ships, and private and commercial aircraft in the United States. The totals do not include electric motors.

## Agriculture's Increasing Buying Power

With gross farm income expected to be around \$1½ billion higher in 1961 than in 1960, agriculture is becoming an even better customer.

Equipment and machinery purchases may be increased by as much as \$100 million to \$150 million as a result. These additional purchases are important to labor, business, and industry from the retailer through the steel industry to the iron mines.

Agriculture will spend more for other production items—fuel, oil and other petroleum products, pesticides, fertilizer, and containers. Some farmers will improve or build new homes. Others will make capital investments in new or better farm service buildings.

Farmers also will use a part of their increased income for furniture, refrigerators, clothing, medical care, education for their children, recreation, debts, and savings.

In the process, nonfarm employment is created and maintained. Labor's buying power will become more stable. Agriculture in turn will be benefited by a steadier demand for its products.



## Agriculture—Creator of Employment

Farming creates more than two jobs off the farm for every job in agriculture.

The 7.1 million workers producing food and fiber exceed the combined employment in transportation, public utilities, the steel industry, and the automobile industry.

But at least 16 million additional workers have jobs related to agriculture. Six million people have jobs providing the supplies and equipment farmers use for production. Ten million people have jobs storing, transporting, processing, manufacturing, and merchandising the products of agriculture.

The food industry alone employs 5.2 million people, and paid them \$20½ billion in 1960.

Other jobs are created as the food industry buys equipment and machinery, constructs processing plants and new supermarkets, and buys advertising space or time. The industry's advertising bill in 1960 was estimated at \$1.3 billion. Three of the four top merchandising firms in the country (based on annual sales) are foodstores.

## The Consumer Benefits

The American consumer is the beneficiary of agriculture U.S.A. 1962.

Food today is one of the biggest bargains in the market.

Measure the cost of food by the number of hours of work required to earn the money to feed a family. The typical factory worker in 1960 could buy 1 year's "market" basket of *farm foods* for wages from 515 hours of labor—209 fewer hours than were required in 1947-49. Thus, he had take-home pay from 209 hours (about \$425) in 1960 to upgrade the family diet (for example, more meats), or to spend for other products—appliances, furniture, education, or services.

Compare the amount of food 1 hour's factory work will buy with the amount in years past. Wages from 1 hour of factory work today buys 83 percent more round steak, 126 percent more milk, 138 percent more oranges, or 169 percent more bacon than in 1929.

Measure the cost of food by the percentage

of take-home pay required to buy it. Americans spent only one-fifth of their disposable income for food in 1960, as compared with more than one-fourth of their take-home pay in 1947-49. This is a much smaller percentage than the people of many other countries pay for their food. (See p. 8.)

Compare the cost of food with that of other costs of living. Food has risen less since 1947-49 than most other consumer items in the cost-of-living index. For all items other than food, the increase to September 1961 was 32 percent. The cost of housing increased 32.6 percent; rent, 43.9 percent, and medical care, 61.7 percent. For *all* food (including seafood and food served in restaurants), the increase was 21.1 percent.

By these yardsticks, food is a bargain.

## But the Farmer Hasn't Benefited

The price of food at the farm gate was 12 percent lower in 1960 than it was in 1947-49.

The retail price of farm food rose by 12 percent from 1947-49 to 1960.

During the same period, the marketing cost of *all* food rose 36 percent.

The farmer's share of the dollar spent at retail for farm food has dropped sharply. In 1947-49, the grower received 50 cents of each \$1 spent for farm food. In 1960, the farmer's share was 39 cents. In 1959, it was 38 cents—the lowest since 1939. In the depression years of 1932 and 1933, the grower received 32 cents of each dollar spent for farm food.

As a general rule, the farmer's share of the food dollar declines as the amount of food processing increases. The wheat grower's share of the dollar spent for white flour is 33 cents. When the flour is mixed with other ingredients and baked as white bread, the farmer's share for his wheat drops to 11 cents—or 2.3 cents for the wheat in a 20-cent loaf of bread. The corn grower gets 18 cents of the dollar spent for cornmeal, and 9 cents of the dollar for cornflakes—or 2.3 cents for the corn in a 26-cent box of cornflakes.

The growing demand for foods in more convenient forms—heat-and-serve, ready mixes,

dehydrated, or concentrated and frozen—has increased marketing costs. Much of the labor of preparing these foods for serving has been transferred from the family kitchen to the factory.

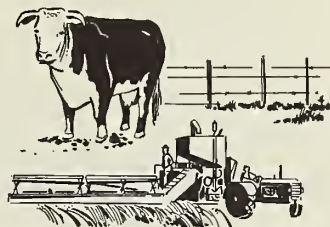
The farmer's share of the dollar spent for cotton in clothing and household furnishings and for the tobacco in cigarettes is even lower

than his share of the dollar for farm food.

Of the dollar spent for all cotton clothing, the grower received 11 cents in 1960; for house furnishings of cotton, 21 cents. The tobacco producer received about 14 cents of the dollar spent for cigarettes—or less than 4 cents for the tobacco in a 27-cent package of cigarettes.



## USDA'S FIRST CENTURY



The history of USDA's first century is also the history of 100 years of American agriculture.

But society's support of agriculture through government traces to the beginnings of civilization. The relationship was born of necessity in mankind's struggle against hunger. All nonagricultural pursuits—trades, professions, arts—were directly dependent on an agriculture that consistently could produce more food and fiber than its growers consumed. A classic example is the Biblical story of Joseph whose foresight of famines led to national policies protecting the Egyptian civilization from devastation.

In this country, government help to agriculture began in colonial times. As early as 1622, King James I encouraged a new agricultural industry here—the growing of mulberry trees and the breeding of silkworms. The English civilization of that day hoped to produce its own supply of luxurious silk. In 1908—286 years later—leaders of the American civilization were still trying to develop a silk industry with government help, to save annual imports of \$64 million.

Silk production never succeeded here, but government efforts in its behalf illustrate this fact: Government services for agriculture, for labor, for commerce, and for all other purposes are provided because society or some

segment of it wants help and the Congress authorizes it.

That point was made by President Washington in his last message to the Congress on December 7, 1796: "It will not be doubted that with reference either to individual or national welfare agriculture is of primary importance. In proportion as nations advance in population and other circumstances of maturity this truth becomes more apparent, and renders the cultivation of the soil more and more an object of public patronage. Institutions promoting it grow up, supported by the public purse; and to what object can it be dedicated with greater propriety?"

Washington recommended the establishment of a national agricultural board. The duties he wanted assigned to the board are almost identical to the functions and duties assigned to the Department of Agriculture in the congressional act creating it in 1862.

Washington said this agricultural board should be charged with "collecting and diffusing information \* \* \* drawing to a common center the results everywhere of individual skill and observation, and spreading them thence over the whole nation."

The act creating the Department directed it "to acquire and to diffuse among the people of the United States useful information on subjects connected with agriculture in the



most general and comprehensive sense of that word, and to procure, propagate, and distribute among the people new and valuable seeds and plants."

Many steps were taken, however, between Washington's 1796 message to Congress and the passage of the act creating the Department in 1862.

## Collecting New and Valuable Seeds and Plants

In 1819, the Secretary of the Treasury directed consuls to collect seeds and plants (as Benjamin Franklin had done in colonial times and as Thomas Jefferson had done shortly after Independence) for introduction in this country, although there was no appropriation for it. In 1820, the House established a Committee of Agriculture, as did the Senate in 1825. From 1836 to 1845, the principal voice in government for agriculture was that of Henry L. Ellsworth, first Commissioner of Patents.

Ellsworth distributed seeds and plants to farmers in 1836 and 1837 without congressional authorization but with the use of franks of Congressmen friendly to agriculture. He requested funds from Congress to collect and distribute seeds and to compile agricultural statistics. The first authorization (\$1,000) for those purposes was made in 1839. By 1854, the Agricultural Division of the Patent Office employed a chemist, a botanist, and an entomologist, and was conducting experiments.

## A Growing Nation—A Changing Agriculture

The nation was approaching the maturity Washington mentioned. It was growing in population, expanding westward, developing industry, building railroads, competing in new markets.

Agriculture also was changing—from a subsistence type of farming with most of the food and fiber processed on the farm to a commercial type of farming. The new textile industry was taking weaving from the home. Agriculture also had new tools—the steel

plow (1837), the mowing machine (1831), the reaper (1833–44), and the stationary thresher and fanning mill (in the 1830's). Specialized factories were established to manufacture farm equipment. The farmer's investments in these machines required him to seek more funds. He became more dependent on the commercial market—for the sale of his products and for his implements.

The steamship was bringing the world market closer to American shores. By 1839, American agricultural exports totaled \$80 million. Repeal of the British Corn laws (following the terrible famine Ireland had after the failure of its 1845 potato crop) enabled this country to export food grains freely to Great Britain.

During this changing, growing period, many farm editors, agricultural leaders, and officers of the numerous county and State agricultural societies continued to urge that agriculture be represented in the Federal Government by a separate agency. The United States Agricultural Society assumed leadership of the movement. These efforts, combined with Lincoln's support of agrarian reform, led to the establishment of the United States Department of Agriculture, with a Commissioner at its head.

The same forces also led in 1862 to two other congressional acts affecting agriculture—the Homestead Act, opening public land to private ownership, and the Land-Grant College Act, which authorized the use of Federal land to endow in each State a college to teach agriculture and the mechanic arts.

Commissioners directed the Department from 1862 to February 1889. Then Congress raised the Department to Cabinet rank, and Norman J. Colman, previously commissioner, became the first Secretary of Agriculture.

## Protecting Consumers

During its first year, the Department established a Division of Chemistry, and in the second year Divisions of Entomology and Statistics. New responsibilities and new duties were added to meet the changing needs of agriculture and the economy. As early as

1883 the Department was studying the problem of butter adulteration "to aid the dairy interest in establishing a standard of good butter and to protect consumers against fraud."

Decade after decade, the Department's responsibilities for consumer welfare were increased with such activities as meat inspection, meat grading, poultry inspection, grading of fruits and vegetables, human nutrition and home economics, defense, and other similar activities until today much of its annual budget is used for the benefit of consumers and the general public.

## Fighting Diseases and Pests

Federal regulatory work across State lines came into being because of contagious pleuropneumonia in cattle. The price of steers dropped sharply in 1879 and valuable export markets, particularly in Great Britain, were curtailed because of the disease. When the disease became a national problem because of losses to cattlemen and a sharp drop in exports, Congress was asked to turn the job of eradication of pleuropneumonia over to the Department of Agriculture. Thus, the Bureau of Animal Industry was created in 1884. Within 5 years—a world record for the control of pleuropneumonia—the disease which came from abroad in 1843 was wiped out. The total cost of this work was \$1,509,100—a little less than the estimated annual loss in export value of cattle to Great Britain.

Today, Department workers stand guard at the borders to turn back foreign diseases and pests of agriculture. They also can be mobilized quickly to help eradicate any pests that slip through—as the Mediterranean fruit fly did in the 1950's in Florida—or to join with a neighboring nation to stamp out a disease, as was done in Mexico when foot and mouth disease became established there in the late 1940's.

Great medical advances have resulted from agricultural research. When Department scientists in the late 1880's discovered Texas cattle fever was transmitted by ticks, the breakthrough paved the way for control of

yellow fever, malaria, and other insect-borne diseases of humans. In recent years, Department research developed mass-production methods for penicillin, and created the blood plasma extender Dextran and other medical products.

## Expanding Research, Education, Information

Through the years, the research, statistical, information, and education work of the Department has been enlarged.

In 1887 came the Hatch Act, which established a nationwide system of State agricultural experiment stations in cooperation with the Department.

The second Secretary of Agriculture, Jeremiah McLain Rusk, who served from 1889 to 1893, began the regular publication of *Farmers' Bulletins*, started a Division of Publications, and began to serve the press directly. As new communications media were developed, the Department added radio, television, and motion picture services to carry out its responsibility for disseminating information.

Rusk also pioneered in another area of great importance today—the investigation of foreign markets for American farm products.

After the national forests were transferred to the Department from Interior in 1905, forestry and forest management for production of timber, for recreation, for wildlife, and for watershed protection became important departmental functions. The Weeks law (1911) established a new national policy—the purchase by the Federal Government of forest lands necessary to protect watersheds.

Cooperative extension work in agriculture and home economics was provided by the Smith-Lever Act of 1914, under which a nationwide agricultural educational system formally was set up in cooperation with the State Land-Grant Colleges.

The economic dislocations caused by World War I and declines in farm prices led to an intensification of statistical and economic research that would aid farmers in meeting market needs. The Department encouraged



farmers to organize cooperatives, particularly for marketing their products.

## Assisting City Dwellers as Well as Farmers

The major depression which extended throughout the economy in 1929, after several years of agricultural depression, and reached its depth in the early 1930's led to the passage of the Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1933. The Department was assigned, for the first time, responsibility for administering a program providing economic assistance directly to farmers.

The same economic circumstances that led to the passage of the Agricultural Adjustment Act led to programs that emphasized better rural credit facilities, soil conservation, aid for poverty-stricken farmers to acquire farms, and loans for rural electrification.

These programs were concerned primarily with rural welfare and farm production, but they also affected city dwellers as well. For example, the Omnibus Flood Control Act of 1936 recognized for the first time that agriculture had an important role in flood control and prevention—a role as important to urban areas as to rural. Various conservation authorities given to the Department also were supported by nonfarm groups, because of the need for wise use that preserved soil, water, grass, and forest resources for all Americans. The Multiple Use-Sustained Yield Act (1960) directed that national forests shall be administered for the sustained yield and multiple use of all their renewable natural resources.

The depression, however, affected city dwellers as well. Many of them were unable to purchase sufficient food, even though the farmers were told they raised a surplus that could not be marketed profitably. The Department, working with welfare agencies, set up programs for distributing surpluses to the needy in both cities and rural areas, and began to emphasize marketing and distribution as well as the production of farm products. The Research and Marketing Act came in 1946.

Food distribution abroad became important during and after World War II, when the War Food Administration, which was part of the Department, allocated scarce foods among our allies, the Armed Forces, and the civilian population. The War Food Administration also helped farmers to expand production to meet needs at home and abroad.

## A Continuing Job

Today, using both existing and new authorities, the Department is redirecting its efforts to help agriculture to adjust to and benefit from the ever-increasing number of technical and scientific breakthroughs of the age of abundance—from which consumers already are benefiting. The goals include:

- Increased farm income through supply management under programs which farmers themselves have helped to develop, commodity by commodity, and which assure the nation adequate food and fiber supplies at fair prices.

- Strengthening the efficient family farm to prevent concentration of power over food and natural fibers and prices for them.

- Increasing consumption of farm products, through market research and development, research to find new uses and forms of food and natural fiber, through direct distribution of food to the needy to provide an adequate and varied diet, school lunch and milk programs for children, through expanded exports to all countries able to buy American farm products, and through Food for Peace programs to the peoples of the newly developing nations.

- Developing rural areas with credit, watershed protection and improvement projects, technical and educational help, and other assistance. This is an effort in which other Federal agencies are helping, the common goal being to aid local people to expand opportunities for training and education and for full employment of rural farm and non-farm underemployed.

- Expanding conservation use to all farmland and its water, forest, and grass resources.



• Helping agriculture to be prepared to meet every foreseeable defense or emergency need of our Nation and of friendly nations.

Because the achievement of these and related objectives depend in large part on the

support of nonfarm people, the Department is seeking to achieve a broad understanding of agriculture, its problems, and its importance to all Americans and to the national economy.

## OTHER SERVICES ONCE IN USDA

Many important services now performed by other branches of the Federal Government had their beginning in, or at one time were provided by, the Department of Agriculture which had its own beginning in the Patent Office.

*The Bureau of Public Roads* (Department of Commerce) began in 1893, when the Secretary of Agriculture created the Office of Road Inquiry. This service was transferred out of the Department of Agriculture in 1939.

*The Fish and Wildlife Service* (Department of the Interior) traces in part to work started in 1885 by the Secretary of Agriculture in what then was the Division of Entomology. A separate Bureau of Biological Survey was authorized in 1905. This bureau was transferred to Interior in 1939 and, in 1940, was consolidated with Interior's Bureau of Fisheries to become the Fish and

Wildlife Service. The Bureau of Fisheries was never in USDA.

*The Weather Bureau* (Department of Commerce), stemming from a weather service established in 1870 under the Signal Service of the Army, was created in the Department of Agriculture in 1891. It remained there until it was transferred to Commerce June 30, 1940.

*The Food and Drug Administration* (Department of Health, Education, and Welfare) was authorized in 1927 as the Food, Drug, and Insecticide Administration in Agriculture. It was renamed Food and Drug Administration in 1930, was transferred to the Federal Security Agency in 1940, and to HEW in 1953.

*The Farm Credit Administration*, now an independent agency of the executive branch, was in the Department of Agriculture from 1939 to 1953.

## CENTENNIAL MATERIALS AVAILABLE



Many materials—bulletins, leaflets, books, motion pictures, filmstrips, radio tapes, and exhibits—will be available for the observance of the Centennial Year of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

A new series of 16 mm, 13½-minute motion pictures, in color and in black and white and cleared for television, are being produced for release about May 1, 1962. They include:

**OUR LAND—ITS MANY FACES** traces the history of soil and water conservation from colonial days to the present.

**HERITAGE RESTORED** offers a unique historical report on the establishment of National Forests in the eastern part of the United States.

**DISCOVERY** is the story of agricultural research.

OUR AGRICULTURAL LIFELINES presents today's farm marketing system.

ALICE IN NUMBERLAND portrays, through the world of fantasy, how statistical research guides the flow of America's food from farm to table.

WE SHOW THE WAY is a report on agricultural education.

IT'S A FARMER'S BUSINESS presents the farmer cooperatives and their place in the American economy.

A documentary centennial film, AGRICULTURE U.S.A., also is in production. In color, it will run 27½ minutes. This film is a sweeping panorama of today's agriculture, with a glimpse of the future.

The major new books will be the 1962 YEARBOOK OF AGRICULTURE and the first comprehensive history of the Department. Their publication dates and prices have not been announced.

The walk-through photo exhibit, "The Changing Faces of Our Land," will be shown in the Department's Administration Building in Washington starting May 14, 1962. It will be available for use elsewhere after June 22.

This exhibit consists of two separate sections, each 25 x 25 x 8 feet. The other principal exhibit tells "The Meat Miracle" story. This display covers 1,000 square feet of floor space. Transportation costs are paid by exhibitors.

Filmstrips, which are available by purchase only, include:

"When It's Your Turn at the Meat Counter"—C-16.

"America the Beautiful"—C-77. (Conservation.)

"Food Costs"—C-80.

"Food Is A Bargain"—C-83.

"4-H Club Work in the USA."—698.

"Soil Conservation Is Your Business"—706.

The Department also has many bulletins and leaflets that will help to explain agriculture's importance to consumers, to the national economy, and to defense. These include "Background on Our Nation's Agriculture" (Leaflet 491), "The Food We Eat" (Miscellaneous Publication 870), "Food Is A Bargain" (Marketing Bulletin 18), and "The U.S. Department of Agriculture: How It Serves You" (PA-394). Single copies are available without cost.

## Where To Obtain Materials

MOTION PICTURES FOR TELEVISION—Motion Picture Service, Office of Information, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington 25, D.C. For showings of films other than on television, ask Motion Picture Service for a list of cooperating film libraries in the States.

EXHIBITS—Exhibit Service, Office of Information, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington 25, D.C.

FREE BULLETINS AND LEAFLETS—Publications Division, Office of Information,

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington 25, D.C.

THE YEARBOOK OF AGRICULTURE AND THE DEPARTMENT HISTORY—Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington 25, D.C.

Watch for dates of publication and prices.

FILMSTRIPS—Photo Lab, Inc., 3825 Georgia Avenue, NW., Washington 11, D.C.



